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10.09.2014 > 18.01.2015

Paintings from Siena
Ars Narrandi in Europe's Gothic Age

The Yellow Side Of Sociality
Italian Artists in Europe

Love Difference – Mar Mediterraneo.
Michelangelo Pistoletto

PALEIS VOOR
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WWW.BOZAR.BE | +32 (0)2 507 82 00

**PRESS
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Giovanni di Paolo, *Madonna dell'Umiltà*, ca 1450, Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale - V.u. | Ex. Paul Dejardin, rue Ravensteinstraat 23 - 1000 Brussel | Bruxelles - Vrij van zegel, ant.1871 | Exempt de timbre



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PAINTINGS FROM SIENA. Ars Narrandi in Europe's Gothic Age

10.09.2014 > 18.01.2015

PRESS RELEASE

The exhibition focuses on the refined medieval painting tradition in Siena. Visitors can see sixty rare masterpieces from the heyday of the European Gothic age!

BOZAR pays tribute to Siena with **over sixty exceptionally refined masterpieces** from the collection of the **Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena**, supplemented with loans from French museums. The public can see **about sixty unique works**, dating from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, which will be exhibited in the capital of Europe for the first time. The **thematic arrangement of the works** gives visitors the opportunity to discover masterpieces from the heyday of the **European Gothic Age**.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Siena was one of the leading **artistic, financial and intellectual centres** of Europe. The Siennese artists and their workshops enjoyed an excellent reputation and were renowned for their **unparalleled craftsmanship and refined painting style**. They received commissions from some of the most prominent and richest clients in Europe. Popes, emperors, rich merchants and public institutions readily purchased the works of these talented artists.



“Ars narrandi”, the art of storytelling

A **new style** developed under the impetus of painters such as **Duccio, Simone Martini, the Lorenzetti brothers, Sassetta and Giovanni Di Paolo**. The Siennese masters gradually broke free from the shackles of the Byzantine tradition with its idealised, divine and static figures, developing a **more narrative visual language** instead. The Siennese painters “narrated” well-known Biblical stories in a **lively and recognisable manner**. Their figures looked more human, openly showed their feelings and wore contemporary clothes. This way, the faithful could better identify with these pious examples. The didactical role of these paintings should not be underestimated at a time when the majority of the population was illiterate.



Siena, a European crossroads

Siena's location along the **Via Francigena**, the pilgrim's route which runs from the north of Europe to Rome, past the southern Italian ports to the Holy Land, turned the city into an **important centre of trade, promoting artistic exchanges**. The paintings, often small diptychs that were easy to transport, portable altarpieces and miniatures, were distributed via this route. They fascinated the other centres in Europe, and ultimately left their mark on art throughout the rest of Europe.



Focus on Italy

This exhibition is a collaboration with the prestigious **Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena** and the French **Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen** (which will host the exhibition from 21.03 to 17.08.2015). The Brussels exhibition is organised in the framework of the **Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**.

To mark this occasion the Centre for Fine Arts presents the multidisciplinary programme **Focus on Italy**. Other events besides the exhibition *Paintings from Siena. Ars Narrandi in the European Gothic Age* include contemporary art with *The Yellow Side of Sociality. Italian Artists in Europe*, music, theatre, dance, literature, cinema and architecture. Further information at www.bozar.be (<http://www.bozar.be/activity.php?id=15252>).

Curators: Mario Scalini, Anna Maria Guiducci

Coproduction: Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen

Support: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo, Soprintendenza per i Beni Storici, Artistici ed Etnoantropologici per le Province di Siena e Grosseto, Belgian Federal Public Service, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Leventis Foundation

Under the Patronage of Their Majesties the King and the Queen

Under the Patronage of the President of the Italian Republic

In the framework of the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Credits:

Image 1: Madonna di San Bernardino, Dietisalvi di Speme, *Madonna with Child on a Throne and Two Angels (called Madonna di San Bernardino)*, 1262, inv. 16, tempera on board, 142 x 100 cm, Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale

Image 2: Madonna with Child, Simone Martini, *Madonna with Child*, 1300-1310, inv. 583, tempera on board, 88 x 57 cm, Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale

Image 3: Saint Michael Archangel, Angelo Puccinelli, *Saint Michael Archangel on a Throne with Saints Anthony Abbot and John the Baptist*, 1370-1380, inv. 67, tempera and gold on board, 182 x 154 cm, Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale

Image 4: Christ Instituting the Eucharist, Stefano di Giovanni, known as « Il Sassetta », *Christ Instituting the Eucharist*, 1424, inv. 167, *predella* panel of the Arte della Lana altarpiece, tempera on board, 24.1 x 37.9 cm, Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale

Siena between trade routes and the migration of artistic craftwork

Since all the other arts were recommended in letters by our great men, and since painting was not neglected by our Latin authors, I believe that our ancient Tuscan ancestors were already most expert masters in painting in Italy. Thus wrote Leon Battista Alberti in his *De Pictura*, highlighting how figurative art was not complementary but rather autonomous and equal to literary expression, a language in its own right able to allow different people with different traditions and backgrounds to communicate with one another.

What seemed evident for Renaissance treatise writers may seem less obvious today, even though recent studies have shown that a message entrusted to visual perception is, to all intents and purposes, effective and quantified as being hundreds of thousands of times more immediate. The reason for this lies in man's innate ability to read visual signs, incomparably more laden with meaning than the written word and whose gradual unravelling has been part of our habits only for the past few millennia.

This, which we may consider an axiom of art history studies, means acquiring contents channelled by images as the first and inescapable step, even when considering the effectiveness with which they had been expressed. All this establishes the artistic quality level of what is examined.

By highlighting Siena's most prolific artistic age, which unquestionably dates from the mid-1200s up to the early 1500s, means beginning from the observation of how a phenomenon of linguistic standardization was born in that city and subsequently spread throughout the entire world known up to then.¹

Firstly, we must keep in mind the fact that Siena was found at a key location along the so-called "Via Francigena", that is, along the road that from northern (Frankish) Europe led to Rome and, from there, to the ports of Puglia, to lands beyond the sea and ultimately to Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire until it was conquered by the Turks in 1453. In fact, in Siena various pilgrim roads and trade routes from Germany converged and, after the turbulent events that led Jerusalem into Christian hands from 1099 until the city was lost in 1244 (at the time of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen), a political and economic context was created that allowed a constant flow of people and goods from the North Sea to Egypt, both along the Adriatic coast and on the roads to Rome (fig. 1).

¹ In his presentation of the celebrated exhibition *Il Gotico a Siena* in 1982, held in Siena and also in Avignon (with the necessary variations), Giovanni Previtali validated the period chosen, which from its start came to a halt in the mid-1400s, justifying such chronological limits for reasons within the developing art of Siena, considering the autonomous experience of the city's creativity as coming to an end in the phase when the "looming" presence of Florence shadowed those illumination and calligraphic characters he read, sharing with most such an opinion, as a sort of *genius loci* which had accompanied the sensibility of local artists from the beginnings of an independent "school". Thirty years after that complex general reading of Sienese art, it is perhaps harder than ever to justify a bold interpretation in rereading Siena's art, this time however, with aperture towards Europe which nonetheless could be intuited in other exhibitions. In fact, only today, as our cultural and political horizons have broadened, may we embark upon not only critical reconsiderations – which would be arrogant even only to imagine with our means at disposal – but a reweaving of Sienese art in the great tapestry of pre-mannerist European culture, taking note that the Renaissance, in the Florentine sense of the term, was a phenomenon extraneous to the experiences of most continental countries, with sporadic flowering beyond the Alps in the lands of Matthias Corvinus, in the Adriatic and Aegean territories dominated by the Venetians, in some French, Spanish or Flemish contexts, though always without a future. Even on the Italian peninsula, episodes like the one in Castiglione d'Olona, where Florentine and Sienese masters coexisted, or in Naples, remain a sort of *enclave* in the more generalized gothic sensibility of the context.

The road from Brussels by way of Paris then to Rome and the ports of the Gargano in Puglia towards Constantinople or the Holy Land was a river of people under the vigil protection of the Archangel Michael, worshipped in countless churches, the guardian of cities and abbeys but also ready to appear almost anywhere.

Today, this extraordinarily complex context engages scholars with far-reaching observations that were previously unheard of, thus shifting our perception from the uniqueness of local artistic expressions to an interdisciplinary and international consideration of events. In other words, what becomes more and more evident is the fact that the confines of the medieval universe are quite broader than what has been suspected up to now and that cultural exchange was much more intense and daily than what has been commonly upheld.

A river of men and objects spawned, in less than two generations, a network of relations that were new with respect to the ancient world, while sharing contents and symbols of varying kinds.



Fig. 1 — Opicinus de Canistris (1296–c. 1350), anthropomorphic mapping made at the Avignon court. Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana, Codex Palatinus 1993, f. 5r.

Unity and Dignity of the Arts in the Middle Ages and Renaissance

The study of – mainly Italian – medieval art concerning painting “workshops”, also devoted to making everyday objects (from furniture to furnishings, to shields, flags or “banners” and even helmets and crests painted until the 1400s, plus seals, sacred and profane goldsmithery, elaborate hides, also painted and gilt) and much more has up to now suffered prejudice due to a detail that is tied too much to the restrictions of the field of study. The complexity of research on such distant and thus scarcely documented periods naturally penalizes non-monumental works.

Siena’s fortunate condition, where many written documents by institutions and “authorized” writings on behalf of others are found, has allowed scholars to trace a reasonably accurate and certainly trustworthy picture, which perhaps is only missing comparison internationally, in order to become the yardstick of our general interpretation of artistic phenomena.

It should be noted that what emerges from – accurate though obviously mythicizing – documents and local traditions could be extended to the rest of Europe and certainly to the Francophile context and related to the events of the Anjou rulers both in France and in Southern Italy.

Confirmation may also derive from possible comparisons that can be made to events in Florence during subsequent periods or to what Giorgio Vasari in his *Lives* wrote or, before him, Lorenzo Ghiberti in his *I Commentari*.

Regarding the activity of artists, we may observe that they took part in social life in all its aspects, including warfare; in fact, the Florentine painter Coppo di Marcovaldo was taken prisoner by the Sienese during the Montaperti attack (4 September 1260). During his imprisonment, he executed the *Maestà*, today found in the Church dei Servi in Siena, dating to 1261, probably in payment for his freedom.

So what was a painter doing in the Florentine army? The answer seems simple: he would paint and repair shields and pavise (large equestrian war shield, at times richly embellished to display the arms and coats-of-arms of families and shown by a page – like the one re-adorned by Taddeo di Bartolo with the Bonamici crest currently housed in the Museo Comunale Stefano Bardini in Florence), design obsidional wooden machines, work hides for equestrian decorations and for

individual protection during combat (for example, Guillaume Bertrand de Durfort in the SS. Annunziata Church, who died in Campaldino in 1289). Therefore, “handy” artists, sophisticated artisans at the service of the ruling class, managers of workshops or “consortia” and occasional groups, able to satisfy many needs and who, as Cennino Cennini said, knew how to paint both with oil and tempera, to gild, to emboss, to plaster and so forth.

Acknowledging the presence of artists in Christian armies, even engaged overseas, allows us to immediately pinpoint a panorama of activity that is completely different from what has been believed up to now. In addition to what is expressed above as an explanation of this phenomenon, that is, that an army necessarily required the presence of artists-artisans in order to logistically support itself, it is worth mentioning again the desire of each Christian to go on pilgrimage to the holy sites in the East (not to mention Rome, which was more convenient) and to travel as part of a royal or imperial army, which was unquestionably the surest way in realizing such religious aspirations.

On the other hand, it suffices to take note of the wealth of Byzantine-derived illustrated treatises on warfare in our libraries (illustrated though often significantly lacking written commentary) to convince us that “machine engineers”, who for the most part were also master masons able to work on projects ranging from churches to fortresses, accompanied armies on the Crusades, making sure of the fact that each specific profession in the art world took part in these mass efforts.

More simply, if talents and skills shifted from the north to Jerusalem, it is impossible not to admit that often the exodus of creative people could develop in the opposite direction, as they returned back to their homes and communities, enriched by or simply satisfied with their religious or mundane experiences, in the hopes of reclaiming a quieter and more peaceful everyday life.

Yet it remains difficult to come to terms with the almost unquestionable fact that many masters we praise as innovators of medieval painting grammar underwent training, for varying lengths of time, as makers of everyday items. We need to abandon a substantially post-16th-century outlook, induced by Vasari’s *Lives*, in order to recuperate historical reality: for reasons that have been thoroughly explained by historiography and criticism, Giorgio Vasari shed light on the creative genius of artists, raising them to the heights of men of letters, be it in the field of architecture or painting or sculpture. By taking root in the mythicized figure of Michelangelo, the courtesan from Arezzo literally invented the image of the creative genius, inaugurating, from the 1500s onwards, a different way of understanding art as an individual and poetical creative moment that today, broadened by the romantic movement, we share.

The everyday reality of medieval artists was completely different though. What suffices to explain this is the famous anecdote Vasari writes about, concerning Giotto. If Giotto embraced without any objection a commission from a fellow citizen to decorate a pavise, we may be certain that this was not something uncommon (fig. 2).²



Fig. 2 — Taddeo di Bartolo (1362–1422), pavise with the Bonamici coat-of-arms. Florence, Museo Comunale Stefano Bardini.

² This precious object was recently attributed with an entry by Gianluca Amato in Siena 2010, e. 29, p. 418, who strives to specify that the Bonamici family who owned the pavise is from Volterra and not Siena. In accepting this identification, seeing the fluidity of heraldic forms in communes (not only in Tuscany), further surprises may come our way. However, we should note that radiographic studies of the work (I thank Fiorenza Scalia for the information) show an original exclusively geometric decoration. This demonstrates how the “shield”, whose type Laking dated to around 1405 (Laking 1920–1922, p. 227), was initially intended for use on the battlefield. The shape, quite unlike knightly arms (for its dating, the one that concerns us here is the plaque which is proposed as part of the family’s coat-of-arms) excludes that the object was used for mere show. It suffices to recall the painted pavise in palazzo “Davanzati” in Florence, where these military shields are greatly proposed as frescoes in the

Such work was part of everyday shop tasks, and for certain ones not even the master disdained working on such items, especially when they required particular effort. In fact, according to this anecdote, the joke the painter plays on his arrogant patron does not revolve around commissioning the object (legitimate) but on his insignificant reputation, who by expecting “his weapon to be painted without any further indications, took on a totally inexistent nobility and notoriety: ‘it would have sufficed had you been a de’Bardi or de’Peruzzi,’” explains Giotto as he hands over the shield bearing a skull-cap, a cuirass, a sword and other generic soldier elements (*arms* and not heraldic *coats-of-arms*, but the words, back then, were at times confused), arms both general and surely rendered in the manner of a still life.

Shields, coats-of-arms, feats, various embellishments on everyday objects were the bread and butter of artists. Duccio as well was certainly the “painter of coats-of-arms” at the start of his career. Proof is provided by documents and his first commissions; in fact, in 1278 he was paid for 12 chests intended to hold public documents of the Commune of Siena,³ handmade works that only a neogothic imagination could contrive as richly decorated when the little evidence we possess of this kind clearly shows the preponderance of heraldic elements (also on the shod chest with the *Annunciation* by Francesco di Vannuccio - c. 1330/1333-pre-1391 - in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena) (fig. 3).



Fig. 3 — Francesco di Vannuccio (doc. 1356–1389), shod chest with coat-of-arms, 64 × 38 × 33 cm. Siena, Palazzo Pubblico.

Besides, heraldry was the most authentic European language, which did not derive from a late ancient (therefore classic) tradition, where symbology was anchored to mythology, or from a Christian-Byzantine one, which as we know developed its own syncretic and iconographic symbolic language, stemming from the contents of sacred writings.

In his book on medieval bestiary, Pastoureaux’s fundamental thesis includes, between the lines, some explicative elements on the origin of heraldry in its “figurative” form, which considers animals as protagonists alluding to the virtues and vices of this world.⁴

place of actual ones. By reading coeval inventories we can deduce that in residences plaques, with their relating “crests”, were displayed when members of the family received knightly titles from Communes that, as a decoration, were generally limited to these few signs of knightly bestowment. Therefore, it is unlikely that the Bardini “shield” was intended in this sense. At the most, such an object could have rightly existed by concession of the head of the Anjou house (the gold fleur-de-lis under the label) or the beatification of the effigy who Laking imagines had died in 1405 for the content of the text on the edge. Besides, the helmet with the coat-of-arms makes the image individual, which does not result as belonging generically to the Bonamici family, but to a single member of the household (to be studied). Therefore, it is possible they resorted to making an object of this kind (using an ancient base) upon conferral of a public title that obliged creating a “coat-of-arms” as in the case of the Podesta or the Capitani del Popolo in the Communes. That shields with family heraldry were also applied to tombs (when the owners passed away) is such a widespread and documented thing across Europe there is no need for references; the more plausible hypothesis remains, which may also explain how the work reached Stefano Bardini. In considering the 1899 auction catalogue mentioned by Amato, we understand that the dealer had collected various aristocratic “shields” (plaques and pavise; see also the 1902 and 1918 catalogues), probably by removing them from Commune buildings at the time of Italy’s Unification, or when they were eliminated by the common military trophies like those that “adorned” aristocratic tombs even in the chapels of Santa Croce in Florence. Other “illustrated” shields like the ones by Andrea del Castagno or by Pollajolo cannot be compared, since their origin is different and cannot be discussed here for reasons of space.

³ Giulietta Chelazzi Dini, “La pittura della prima metà del Trecento, Duccio di Buoninsegna”, in G. Chelazzi Dini *et al.* 1997, p. 19.

⁴ Pastoureaux 2012 (Paris 2011).

The extent to which heraldry proved congenial to lay and political communication mechanisms can be well deduced by the historic fortune of such a language that, even today, is more or less explicitly part of our day-to-day lives.

The road taken by Christian iconography is totally parallel. If a particular presentation of a mother and child in her lap arouses heart-felt emotions, this is due to the customary depictions of the Virgin Mary, just as the strong appeal of a woman's gaze marked by the use of *eye liner* certainly takes root in the eyes of Byzantine icons.

The flow of men and things along the road to Rome and Constantinople, across the ports of Puglia for at least three centuries, made it possible for the objects created in Siena for well-off pilgrims to become the common base of a visual language shared in France and in England, in Holland and on the Iberian Peninsula and even in Bohemia and throughout the Empire, up to the Baltic Sea, Poland and Russia.

Duccio and Henry VII of Luxembourg

Among the masterpieces that are part of the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Siena, the most important treasure trove of medieval paintings on board in the world, there is a portable triptych in an exceptional state of conservation (inv. no. 35, fig. 6, cat. 3).

This is a relatively typical handmade work for medieval artistic production: the triptych or travel diptych, intended for everyday worship *in itinere*. This painted wooden version was, in fact, intended for nobility, though mass-produced, seeing the number of works in existence, which maintained French ivory workshops at least from 1230/1250 to beyond the end of the century. The countless ivory diptychs (more rarely triptychs), hinged or pivoted and closable and at times even with illustrations on various levels, depicting scenes from the life and death of Christ or more rarely Marian episodes, were very widespread. Such lavish production, initially characterized by bright colours – sky blue and gold, red and green, but at times even a soft fleshy colour for faces and nude parts – teeming with minute details for the embellishment of garments or the eyes and mouths of the figures, travelled together with well-to-do pilgrims, aristocrats, princes, merchants and other ecclesiastical dignitaries during their trips, as an object of devotion and perhaps even as a relic or blessing to ward off evil (in virtue of a way of understanding an almost superstitious cult, so distant from the ways of the faithful today).

Those “cases” obtained by the innate or consolidated skill of artists were made one after the other, satisfying various requests, be they for the economic means of the client or for personal predilection. Thus one can easily understand their varying level of originality by leafing through the repertoires gathered over time.⁵ That their origin is French, normally identified with the Ile-de-France in the case of courtly objects, should not be questioned, if only to note at times Germanic (Imperial?) rivalry. A Germanic handmade object can be easily identified with respect to a French one by some local inflection, as in the rendering of forms, which call to mind large coeval carved works, or stylistic variations found in “secondary” monuments (seen from a Francophile perspective) of Eastern European areas. Supporting the definition of this context is obviously also the fact that this material (ivory), from Africa, was inevitably monopolized by the Anjou, since between the fifth and twelfth centuries Byzantium had made it one of its preferred materials for courtly art.

⁵ The latest repertoire consists of the Louvre's medieval ivory works, which offers bibliography. Danielle Gaborit-Chopin 2003. Among the most important international collections, we must remember the one at the British Museum and the Victoria & Albert in London, as well as the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence; but the presence of this kind of handmade work is constant and considerable in all medieval art collections.

The work which is reproduced here (fig. 4) and which comes from the Sienese territory (more precisely, from the Church of San Pellegrino alla Sapienza) is of considerable interest for its original structure, made with inlaid and gilt wood, but also for its isolated figures, in bone instead of ivory - with the exception of the Virgin's head - based on Mittel-European models.

Fig. 4 — Germany, Saxony?, *Portable Triptych with Episodes of the Virgin's Life* (Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity and Adoration of the Magi, Presentation in the Temple), last quarter of the 13th century, inlaid bone on carved and gilt wood (the Madonna's head was added in Italy; the Annunciated Virgin and the Archangel's wings are missing; a Magi). On deposit, Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale.



In fact, in considering that trade routes which, from the African continent, headed towards the Far East (where ivory was a sought-after material for many creations; just consider that even today Japanese *netzuké* are preferably carved with this material or, if not available, with “fossil ivory”), we cannot but intuit that the “Christian Principalities Outremer” were a sort of obliged filter. From there, ivory, on galleys and carracks that maybe reached Naples, Pisa or the harbours of southern France as well as by other means, on land, finally ended up in Paris.

The quite scarce presence of peninsular gothic works in ivory (fig. 5) leads us to think that the market for this material was a monopoly, probably royal. Besides, the fact that precisely in the statutes of war glove makers in Paris handles from whale “bone” inside double layers of leather (*gantélet de baleine*) were created, tells us that there existed *in loco* skilled artisans able to make works of this kind, along with such a sophisticated clientele who requested them.⁶

Fig. 5 — Andrea Pisano, Pisa or Florence, tool or dagger pommel, boatswain or astrologist with sextant (missing), 1330–1340, carved ivory. Private collection.



This digression may seem to have led us far from our triptych, but this is not the case, because, considering that the city of Siena was found along the principal route of the so-called “Via Francigena”, which from the heart of Northern Europe led to Rome, we can well imagine, therefore, how many of those ivory travel diptychs or triptychs, had made a quick appearance in Siena, the “citta della balzana”.

⁶ Aside from Crucifixes, among Italian works I know only of the spectacular *Madonna with Child* by Giovanni Pisano, housed in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Pisa and the pommel by Andrea Pisano which is reproduced here and which I already presented in the essay “Tesori dalle rotte d'Oriente” in Florence 2009, pp. 156–161, figure on p. 156. Other ivory carvings come from the Salerno school or still unknown, like the Coultard diptych. More should be said regarding the Embriachi works, which are, at least generally, in hippopotamus tooth.

We can only imagine the reaction of local artists, masters in rendering Byzantine “icons” of a Rome-Constantinople matrix, to such competition. The works must have immediately grown smaller in size, more suited to travel and characterized by subjects dear to worship as well as their inclination to “illuminate” stories and narrative cycles taken from authoritative codices (in turn from Byzantine scrolls). So we may imagine something for everyone, from foldable diptychs, perhaps only with a painting of the Crucifixion, or triptychs with two panels that could be opened and closed at will.

Not very much remains today of these early works. I would even say we have to “descend” at least up to the 1200s in order to see evidence of a local artist “reaction”. The fact remains that even a reduction to average size of quite venerated Madonnas, like the one by Guido da Siena or Dietisalvi di Speme, could be used for household prayer, group worship, but also the practice of decorating the covers of accounts codices for Siena’s Commune (the famous “Biccherne”), must have had further influence.

We should keep in mind that in this field Duccio also tried his hand, though his work in such a minute format is rare or perhaps there is limited research, seeing that his monumental efforts, like the *Maestà* for the Laudesi of Santa Maria Novella in Florence (1285), or the two-faced board for the Duomo in Siena (1311), have engaged scholars more, who nonetheless and unanimously attribute to him the small *Franciscan Madonna* in the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Siena. Little can be dated with certainty from his late period, for reasons outside research, always subject to the discretion of the scholar. However, we may certainly highlight how the portable triptych that is on display at the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Siena (inv. no. 35, cat. 3) unquestionably must have been elaborated under his direct guidance and surely with his assistance, in 1313.

This work, which for many reasons has been at times removed from his repertoire, though always attributed by some, like Boskowitz, to this master, presents itself of difficult interpretation in some parts due to considerable loss of colour in the outlining of the figures.

This damage, despite the excellent conservation of the painting film on the parts present, is due to an unusual technical circumstance, extraneous to Duccio’s practice and to the Sienese school in general, in which the background gold leaf was roughly applied with respect to the edges of the figures.

For various reasons, which range from the formal precision of the master painters to composition repetitiveness, which should be understood as intentional and not dictated by limited imagination, the procedure included an accurate rendering of each single figure or group in their outline. This was possible in that plans were made of the image layout before work on the support and, consequentially, the wood carver and the gilder were completely aware from the start as to the position of the figures in relation to the available surfaces on the board. Such procedures of high “craftsmanship” allowed for considerable savings in the use of the precious metal, which today is something hard to fully comprehend due to the abundance of the material, which at that time was imported only from the Byzantine East in the form of gold coins.⁷

This included great care in covering the backgrounds with gold, though leaving the surfaces perfectly free, finished off a bolo, in the places where those areas would be covered with tempera colours. Respecting such a practice was fundamental also to ensure the work’s durability, seeing that tempera adheres little if nothing on gold leaf, and at the same time not to create undesired metallic transparency the painter would not be able to control or compensate.⁸

⁷ I wish to remind readers how around the Church of San Mamiliano in Sovana a considerable treasure was recently found, consisting of 129 *solidus* from the 5th century, cf. Arcangeli *et al.* 2012.

⁸ Actually, there are some examples of a complex and intentional use of the effect of metal transparency, both with silver and gold leaf; for example, the one found in the *Madonna del Popolo* in Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence.

The triptych in question (fig. 6) - undoubtedly portable, provided that it expressly had at least one mule, seeing its size, and thus intended for a very well-off person - was certainly elaborated as a gift for Emperor Henry VII of Luxembourg who, along the road to Rome and then homeward bound, was expected in the city (1312-1313). This is proven by the figure of the worshipper, kneeling to the left of the Virgin in the central panel, who, with her royal purple garments and crown on her head, cannot but be identified with a ruler. Moreover, the clothes even bear some *clavi*, that is, woven or embroidered inserts that, according to Eastern fashion and which can already be found in the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna (just to make an example of courtly representation in our country), pertained to the ruling class. Last but not least, the proportions between the worshipper and the Virgin in Majesty definitively guarantee the status of the represented.



Fig. 6 — Duccio di Boninsegna and workshop (Master of the *Maestà Gondi*), *Triptych with Stories of the Virgin and Emperor Henry VII Crowned and Kneeling as a Worshipper*, gold leaf and tempera on board. Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale, inv. no. 35 (detail of cat. 3).

Considering these unquestionable facts, it seems hard not to attribute this work to Duccio himself, obviously to be understood in a sense most in line with the age, when, that is, it was not considered fundamental for the master to work first-hand on each and every detail (see relating catalogue entry).

There surely was urgency on the part of the patrons, in all likelihood the Commune of Siena, so that the gift would be ready when the Emperor arrived. This would explain both the unusual imprecision in layering the gold leaf (on the part of a gilder aware of the subjects but also with no precise graphic information - we need only consider the profile of the top of the grotto of the Nativity and, equally banal, of the cave where Christ's tomb is found) as well as a possible intervention especially in the side panels by assistants.

The loss of the figure outlines understandably aroused doubt in an attribution to Duccio. We may also agree that there remain such formal discrepancies to make even a trained eye note many parts as the possible work of an assistant - up to now anonymous - identified as the "Master of the *Maestà Gondi*". Yet the boldness of the Virgin's thrones, starting with the one of the *Madonna Annunciata* in the right pendative, can hardly be attributed to a supporting artist, to whom it is difficult to ascribe the exquisitely elegant *Virgin in Majesty*: the greatly humanized face, far from iconographic styles, the draping traditionally obtained by painting the background though with a confident use of highlighting, be it in rendering the volumes or the flowing lines of the draping edges, all give firmness to this figure that, as never before, comes off the marble background in a gentle and courtly gesture while displaying a flower.

That the city of Siena intended to offer a masterpiece by its most famous artist to the supreme temporal authority in the West seems, in my opinion, almost obvious if we consider the feasts and celebrations when the *Maestà* was placed in the Duomo in 1311.

That such a homage was, in some way, in line with what took place on a daily basis in this Tuscan city when illustrious figures travelled through seems even more evident, if we consider the percentage of small-format works by local schools present in museums and even in private collections.

Belonging to this category of artistic handmade works are the remains of a small board (fig. 7), unfortunately quite impoverished by an incorrect restoration in the 1800s, upon which we perceive the

Crucifix with a suffering Mary and Saint John the Evangelist, portrayed, by what we can still make out from the drawing, in a painful yet restrained desperation. This object, with rich punching, and totally identical with what is found on the *Stroganoff Madonna Diptych* in Saint Petersburg and the *Angel* in Washington, DC, attributed to Simone Martini, seems to be what remains of the prototype, which in part follows and then renews Duccio's teachings, which was the case for many masters in Siena later on in the 1300s.⁹



Fig. 7 — Simone Martini (and assistants?),
Icon with the Crucifixion,
Suffering Virgin and Saint John the Baptist, c. 1330.
Cerreto Guidi, Museo Storico della Caccia e del
Territorio, from the Stefano Bardini Collection.

Sacred and Profane Luxury Objects. Rare and Precious Materials

The flowering trade of handmade painted works, which certainly gave conspicuous wealth to the entire citizenry and work to many masters, was such to justify a census of artistic masters following the Black Death epidemic in 1348, as what would have been done for any group subject to such a catastrophic event. If what remains of small paintings, illuminated codices and handmade works intended for daily use, like the gilt chests and boxes decorated with pastework, offers a precise idea of the business around art and the faithful in Siena, there is certainly much we do not know about goldsmithery and, in all likelihood, other types of goods, such as those made by so-called *ottonari* (brass workers), more familiar with less precious metals than goldsmiths (fig. 8).



Fig. 8 — Sienese or French goldsmith, sketch
for horse curb bit with Tolomei coat-of-arms
and crickets or peacocks,
1290–1310, inlaid copper (previously silvered
and enamelled). Private collection.

We still know very little of this production, and the only work we are able to currently reproduce here is an ornamental accessory (*bozzetta*) for a horse, bearing the Tolomei coat-of-arms; it

⁹ I wish to thank Luciano Bellosi for courteously confirming my supposition even though it must be kept in mind that others, like Bartolomeo Bulgarini, had access to the same punches (for example, in the triptych of Saints Ansano and Galgano at the Pinacoteca Nazionale, inv. nos. 42–43). The *Crucifixion with Saint Francis*, by Ugolino di Nerio, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena (PNS, inv. no. 34), would seem to depend in its elegant gothic style on the board, like an icon, by Simone Martini formerly in the Bardini collection, here published again. That the Florentine board may be a prototype, or in any event a work closer to this one, is proven by the more consummate compositional ratio shown by the painter, who skilfully balances empty and full spaces, ensuring great monumentality in the suffering figures, the precise outlines and the unique poses. Ugolino is not able to obtain the splendid proportional measure between the figure of Christ, exhausted and worn-out, and the Virgin with Saint John who, in holding an edge of his cape to his face, calls to mind the bashful Uta in Naumburg and the disdained knight of the Camposanto in Pisa, horrified by the stench and sight of the three dead people; in Ugolino Jesus's stomach is portrayed like a thin parenthesis, whereas in the Bardini board it is arched with naturalness.

must unquestionably be compared to the family seal which Cioni Liserani understandably did not include in the repertoire of Guccio di Mannaia. The activity of this master, which is difficult to recreate, awaits further research, but we should not neglect the possibility that he was not from Siena, due to those strongly international details that oftentimes are seen in the remaining local works in metal. Moving ahead in time, the execution of the book covers for the Commune of Siena continued, extending up to the 1500s when annexation to the Medici state had become a reality; however, we should note that at the same time there was a flowering of Siennese illumination, certainly not extraneous to the presence in the city of many monastic orders, who commissioned work assiduously, like the Abbey of Sant'Antimo, the one of San Galgano at Montesiepi, and the one at Monte Uliveto.

That the majority of Siennese masters were accustomed to illuminating parchment is proven by the fact that even Simone Martini provided Petrarch with a sophisticated illustrated page before the frontispiece (fig. 9), which resulted from an empathy that stigmatized the bloated knightly class as being equally proud and illiterate, just like the “villains”.

Petrarch surely did not love the knightly world, which he criticized in Naples for their barbaric way of jousting and risking their lives, or the boorishness in Florence for their limited ideals, adding that knighthood was to Florence as “a pig was to a saddle”, though Martini’s illuminations move beyond.

In the cartouches accompanying the figures we read: *Ytala pleclaros tellus alis alma poetas/ Se tibi Graecorum dedit hic attingere metas/ Servius aliloqui retegens archana Maronis/ Ut pateant ducibus pastoribus atque colonis.* (Alma Italic land, you nurture poets, but you are allowed to reach the heights of the Greeks. Servius is he who reveals the mysteries of the noble discourses of [Virgil] Maro, so that it may be clear to soldiers, priests, peasants.)

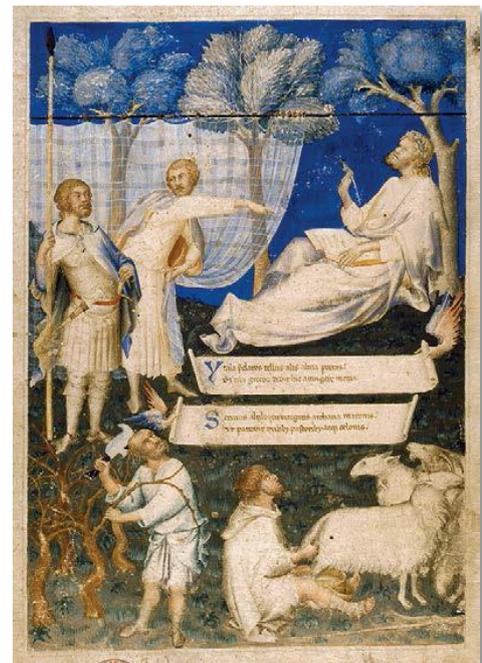


Fig. 9 — Simone Martini, illuminated page of *Virgil*, c. 1338, tempera on parchment, belonging to Francesco Petrarch. Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana.

By revealing him, Servius who stands for Virgil, is, in fact, intended for a presumed Aeneas (soldier) whose armature was easily interpreted, at that time, as contemporary, whereas it has seemed antique-like. Today, since we are able to perceive this, thanks to the latest philology in the field, as fully fourteenth century and moreover of French-Italian provenance, the sense of the scene seems intentionally ambiguous: both the warrior and the peasant, and even the priest, admire Virgil and listen to the explanations of Servius, since they all share a lack of knowledge of the Latin language. This validates the historical reconstruction that relates the birth of illumination to the discovery of the codex, in 1338, after it had been stolen from Petrarch in 1326; it also sheds light on the fact that, since it is in Latin, the ignorance of all his peers was such that it returned to its original owner, justified by the fact he was one of the few lay men-of-letters able to understand its content and, therefore, its value.¹⁰

All artistic literature dealing with the spread of Siennese art styles and their close relationship with French art has attributed to Simone styles that imitate the courtly world. Despite this, I believe we should perhaps broaden the observation to include areas of greater Germanic influence, like Lake

¹⁰ Giulietta Chelazzi Dini, “Pittura senese dal 1250 al 1450”, in Chelazzi Dini *et al.* 1997, ed. 2002, p. 96 with notes, with reference to Luciano Bellosi, entry no. 64 in *Siena 1982*, p. 183; the figure of Aeneas (soldier) refers to the *Aeneid*, while the two peasants are explicitly tied to the *Bucolics* and the *Georgics*. Bellosi also mentions the various collectors of the codex which is currently in the Ambrosiana in Milan.

Constance and a good part of the Rhine Valley, in order to have a clear picture of the influence of such styles.

How this developed or was born in the artist, who comes from a Republican context where aristocratic families were certainly not hegemonic, deserves further attention. If in fact the stories of Saint Martin (fig. 10) already demonstrate the ability to grasp aesthetic standards tied to courtly gestures and manners, probably known through direct contact, it is also clear that there is an “antique” awareness which allows us to single out the ruler prototype overseeing the saint’s investiture, even Frederick’s profile impressed upon gold imperial coins (*Augustalis*, fig. 11).¹¹



Fig. 10 — Simone Martini, *Investiture of Saint Martin*, fresco. Assisi, Upper Basilica.



Fig. 11 — Augustalis of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen.

Since the Saint Louis of Toulouse dates to 1317 circa and the Assisi fresco to around 1320, we could imagine that the Franciscan order must have acted as the gobetween with the Anjou house, which is something problematic to accept if we correctly estimate the extent to which Giotto and his school became the interpreter of the order’s sensibility. If the existence of different schools of thought in the Franciscan order gives credibility to the contrast of such different styles in painting “eloquence”, like Giotto and his school or Martini’s *stilnovismo*, we can surely imagine that the Sienese artist had access to quite many works in Assisi by Germans and papal treasury goldsmiths (almost totally disappeared) to elaborate his own style.

Perhaps we should postulate the understanding of illuminated codices and smallformat paintings that maybe today we have still not been able to trace, but without which the passage from Duccio’s sensibility, which certainly includes Simone, and what we know of the second decade, remains unexplainable.

Today we must surely note some lines of research that have recently come to light, thanks to a re-interpretation of the collections in the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Siena and which seem to offer food for thought in considering, along with somewhat internationalist figures like Memmo di Filippuccio, subjects profoundly interested in salvaging ancient art on a level that appears parallel but also dialectical with the painting world, that is, with sculpture.

¹¹ As we will see, the use of coins as an iconographic source is an element that can already be found in Duccio’s workshop, where Simone certainly trained. This in itself is relatively obvious, considering the widespread diffusion of coins, but the fact that presumably even in the late Middle Ages Roman and even Greek coins in precious metals still circulated has never been, as far as I know, seriously considered by scholars. Some interesting observations by A.M. Stahl, “Image and Art on Medieval Coinage”, in Hourihane 2012, pp. 217–227.

This exhibition does not foresee a re-examination of the activity of Pisano, of Marco Romano, whose possible training in Germany should perhaps also be studied, keeping in mind that even English works reached the nearby Florence, like the *Pura Crucifix*, still in Santa Maria Novella, and that Pisa and Lucca were anything but impervious to influence from beyond the Alps. That Roman statuary could already attract European artists should not be doubted; in fact, a reference to the so-called “putto with goose” type can even be found in the first *Madonna with Child* attributed to Simone Martini, housed in the Pinacoteca Nazionale (inv. no. 583, cat. 4).

Among the forms and contents in Siena’s art we cannot forget the fantastical though codified rendering of terrible good and evil symbolic beings. We cannot deny that small panels handed out to pilgrims along the “Via Francigena” played their part in spreading an iconography in which it would be hard to establish how much it owes to Swabian or rather Anjou influence.

A “peculiarity” of medieval art is unquestionably the rebirth of the “cricket”, carefully studied by Baltrušaitis¹² and the French school, able to re-propose, adapting them to new and different moral meanings, many zoomorphic or anthropomorphic hybrids from the ancient world, picking them from carved gems, coins, amulets and glass paste that abundantly came forth from the earth.

Even though much has been lost of the fresco decorations Italian artists executed beginning in the 1340s, on the walls of the papal palace in Avignon just as in the surrounding homes, where Rico d’Arezzo, Pietro da Viterbo and the Sienese Filippo and Duccio were active, alongside Francesco and Niccolò da Firenze, not to mention Matteo Giovannetti, considerable traces of these creations still remain.

Allegorical crickets can also be found on small majolica tiles, or on pottery, in architectural decorations perhaps the work of English masters, on the few plastic works that remain after Republican violence (fig. 12). Avignon is a never-before-seen “melting pot” that, after Simone’s stay, has Giovannetti as protagonist, who painted with his followers the Chapel of San Marziale, as well as the Chapel of San Michele, which surely influenced angelic iconography if, in 1406, the King of Aragon requested copies of the stories of the many angels depicted there.



Fig. 12 — Papal master workers, 14th century, cricket, sculpted sandstone, from decorations of the Pope Palace, Avignon.

Even illuminations, which scholars have praised, highlighting the figure of the so-called “Master of the Codex of Saint George”, a splendid representative of the peninsula’s figurative culture in a balanced reference to Giotto and Martini, must have constituted a reference point for all of Europe. And it is without a doubt that French master artists - subsequently autonomous - trained in the shadows of the three-dimensional plasticism advocated by Italians.

The constant and tireless relationship between Siena and Northern Europe, Flanders, including Hanseatic cities, awaits further study. Documents already bear witness to the stable commercial presence of Italian merchant colonies, further proven by the - even physical - presence of southern goods. Even in Nordic imaginary we find, though in varying ways, in the late 1400s and beyond, in Bosch and in Brueghel, classical fantastical depictions of crickets and mythological beings that would hardly have been able to survive if relations with lands south of the Alps had been interrupted.

¹² Baltrušaitis [1955–1960], ed. 1981, pp. 9–52.

I believe it is worth investigating further the level of interest and awareness of classical teachings in fields that, perhaps with too much lightness, we indicate as fully gothic, that is, isolating them from the humanistic reinterpretation we acknowledge in Florentine culture and in that of peninsular Renaissance courts.

Siena between Humanism and Tradition

The recent “rediscovery” of a *Nike* from the late 1st century (fig. 13), on deposit at the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Siena, with its restoration and newfound value, allows us to reopen a chapter in the study of local art, which has never been investigated enough in relation to classical antiquity.

If in fact it is still hard to imagine in Siena, as we know today, a precocious philological ferment not unlike what was taking place in Florence, we should not doubt that the bonds, at least from the early 1400s with cities closer to the sea, created a shared attention to Roman forms, as is clearly demonstrated in Jacopo della Quercia’s statuary.

The 1300s were difficult years for Siena, with struggles that brought the city under the protection of Giangaleazzo Visconti between 1399 and his death in 1402. But they are also rich with outside influence,¹³ which led the city’s art to experience a *rinascimento umbratile* (Longhi) that, only with the advent of Pius II Piccolomini as pope (1457), would develop in a greater philological and intentional sense. By considering the work in question, we even imagined some reference to Roman figures in relief in the *Securitas* of the scene with the effects of Good Government Ambrogio Lorenzetti frescoed in the Sala delle Balestre, but the resemblance is anything but evident and its derivation is merely evocative. Nonetheless, that particular work and certainly others, perhaps ending up in an *antiquarium* in the city, were under the gaze of Siennese painters, as instead is proven by the philological quotation of Pietro di Francesco Orioli in the board with the Visitation at the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena (inv. no. 436), where two *Nikai*, *aptere* (wingless) like the Siennese one, embellish an imaginative triumphal arch that seems to embrace the Venetian *quadriga* with the Arch of Titus and the Sistine Chapel frescoes (fig. 14).

These results, in the late 1400s, sanction, upon the return of Francesco di Giorgio Martini, of Antonio Barili, of Giacomo Cozzarelli and Giovanni di Stefano to the city, the support of that Urbino and Roman Renaissance which would be the base of a totally humanistic recovery of Siennese art after a long gothic tradition, even though gradually updated but never completely ignored.

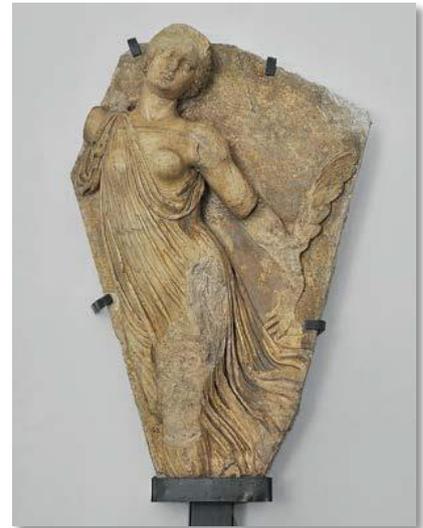


Fig. 13 — Roman art, *Nike* (from the “Prato di Sant’Agostino”), 1st century, statuary marble. Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale (inv. no. 43S).



Fig. 14 — Pietro di Francesco Orioli, altarpiece with the *Visitation*, tempera on board. Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale, inv. no. 436.

¹³ In 1413 the Limbourg brothers were in Siena, whereas in 1423 Gentile da Fabriano was also in the city.

The distance from philosophical thought, at the origin of Sieneese art, intending the spirit of understanding as the element and moment of refusing revealed truths like Catholic ones, rendered the city's figurative art a clear testimony of mystical orthodoxy in the aspect of that which, a contemporary philosopher like Bertrand Russel, qualified as Dionysian abandonment. Religion, imbued with a miraculous nature, denied the principle of chance, which science, born at the dawn of Florentine humanism, indissolubly bound to effect. An artistic confrontation would be inevitable but fruitful: Apollonian Florence versus Dionysian Siena.

A confrontation where the strength of creativity would succumb to the strength of weapons: it almost seems the result of an ironic destiny, that the city of the "balzana" had to yield despite the help of Archangel Michael, its patron, by the wish of Francis I of Valois from the most knightly French aristocracy. Proof remains in the vaulting of the Loggia di Mercanzia in Siena, embellished with stucco which in no way gives in to the complex classical inventions of Fontainebleau, alongside more "robust" and sanguine Florentine creations, as if to mark in one of the city's most representative locations an epoch-making passage, a trauma after which the noble Sieneese art would never be the same.

THE YELLOW SIDE OF SOCIALITY. Italian Artists in Europe

10.09.2014 > 18.01.2015

PRESS RELEASE

This group exhibition presents different generations of artists whose socially and poetically engaged work reflects the many tones and meanings of yellow in Italian and European culture.

The Yellow Side of Sociality. Italian Artists in Europe is presented by BOZAR and the Dena Foundation for Contemporary Art, and **gathers the work of Italian artists, many of whom are based elsewhere in Europe.** What connects them is not geography, or the Italy of Berlusconi, Monti and Renzi, but the fact that in their research and work they explore and give form to Italy's communal sensibility by staging a variety of innovative forms of socialization inside and outside of their country.

The Yellow Side of Sociality brings together work from **several generations**: from established artists **Michelangelo Pistoletto, Ettore Spalletti** and **Vettor Pisani**, by way of **Davide Bertocchi, Rosa Barba** and **Cesare Pietroiusti**, to the new crop, including **Rossella Biscotti, Nico Angiuli** and **Chiara Fumai**.

Various works of art in *The Yellow Side of Sociality* invite visitors to get involved rather than simply looking on from the sidelines. You can choose a number from the jukebox with the "top 100" of the international art scene, an installation by **Davide Bertocchi**. Or get to work on **Marinella Senatore's** interactive movie set. At **Christian Frosi** and **Diego Perrone's** long table you can browse Italian art magazines produced by a young generation that illustrate current trends in the lively art scene in their homeland and abroad. With *BOZAR Silent Tour* **Cesare Pietroiusti** offers an intriguing guided tour around the corridors of the Palace for Fine Arts that normally the general public is not permitted to enter. **Luca Vitone's** *Eppur si muove* is a wheel-shaped sofa, a space for reflection and meetings dedicated to the condition of the Roma people in Europe. **Michelangelo Pistoletto's** *Love Difference – Mar Mediterraneo* installation, on the other hand, is one big mirroring table in the shape of the Mediterranean with chairs from the countries of the region. The image invokes the cultural diversity around the sea, at the same time suggesting solidarity. Everyone is invited to take a seat and share their thoughts about art and society.



Frosi e Perrone
Christian Frosi e Diego Perrone, *Vue de l'exposition Les associations libres à La Maison Rouge*, Paris Courtesy Cripta 747



Bertocchi
Davide Bertocchi
Top 100, 2011
Courtesy of the artist
Installation view at Magazzino d'Arte Moderna,
Rome Photo by Davide Bertocchi

The Yellow Side of Sociality

The title of the exhibition refers to the many meanings of “yellow”, the colour that symbolises the **complexity of Italian identity**. Yellow calls forth positive associations with sunshine, optimism, cheerful lightness and happiness. But yellow is garish, too, a colour of cowardice and jealousy. In Italy, a *giallo* is also a film or novel brimming with sensational crime and mystery.

Curator **Nicola Setari**: “I did not want to underline the difficulty of the current state of affairs in Italy. On the contrary, I wanted to express what I think Italy has to give that can be helpful for Europe today: a special kind of social sensitivity and intelligence that we could define as ‘yellow’. This yellow sociality, as it unfolds in the work of the artists participating in the exhibition, can direct us to ‘the sunny side of the street’, but not in a frivolous way, for, the colour is dense with mystery and exists always on the threshold of danger – yellow is the universal colour of warning.”

BOZAR STREET

The exhibition is displayed on BOZAR STREET, a freely accessible route that connects the **two public entrances** of the Palace for Fine Arts on rue Ravenstein and rue Royale. The STREET runs straight through the Palace, **connecting the two exhibitions in the large circuits**, *Paintings from Siena. Ars Narrandi in Europe's Gothic Age* and *Sensation and Sensuality. Rubens and his legacy*.

On this occasion the STREET extends itself all the way up to the **Justus Lipsius building** of the Council of the European Union in Brussels, where in the main hall visitors can admire a monumental version of **Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Third Paradise***.

Participating artists: Nico Angiuli, Micol Assaël, Rosa Barba, Davide Bertocchi, Rossella Biscotti, Christian Frosi, Chiara Fumai, Renato Leotta, Diego Perrone, Cesare Pietroiusti, Vettor Pisani, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Marinella Senatore, Ettore Spalletti, Luca Vitone, Franz West

Curator: Nicola Setari

Coproduction: BOZAR EXPO, Dena Foundation for Contemporary Art

Support: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy

In the framework of the Italian Presidency of Council of the European Union

Nico Angiuli: *The Tools' Dance – The Vineyards Gestures*

The Tools' Dance, a video project started in 2009, translates the gestures of farm work into choreography. It is an investigation into the changes technological development is introducing into the relationship between the human body and the land. For this multifaceted project, the artist spends time in close contact with the territory, the land and those who work it. *The Tools' Dance – The Vineyards Gestures* was produced in 2013 in Murcia, Spain, where the artist worked and lived alongside a community of Moroccan migrant labourers.

Micol Assaël: *Gli Sconosciuti*

This work consists of an assemblage in paper and beeswax and an audio track in various points of the museum. The sound of a bee flying accompanies the visitor through the exhibition spaces and at the same time works as an aural trap for the bees that fly around the city. The materials used, in fact, might attract them and induce them to remove tiny portions of wax from the model hidden in a strategic point of the BOZAR. This is a possible constructive geometry of a town plan, based on the typographical structure of the page of a newspaper. The empty spaces between the articles assume the appearance of streets or corridors, and the printed parts form the base of the foundations of neighbourhoods and condominiums that have been invented or that emerged as mnemonic traces at the time of reading.

Rosa Barba: *The Indifferent Back of a View Rather Than Its Face*

The text and its double, the ambiguity of the word and of the reality. *The Indifferent Back of a View Rather Than Its Face* is a lightweight tent, like a suspended page whose letters are marks cut in its fabric. The text is a fragment of the autobiography of Vladimir Nabokov. It appears on the wall like an ephemeral projection surrounding the viewer; letters and words made of light filter through the fabric in a dialogue between presence and disappearance, between full and empty spaces, lights and shadows.

Davide Bertocchi: *Top 100*

For more than ten years, Davide Bertocchi has been asking artists and curators to name their favourite music track, thus creating a choral portrait of the multifaceted and complex community of the international art scene. To date, there are more than 600 participants and selected tracks, collected in six *Top 100* compilations. The project, started in 2003 during the artist's residency at the Pavillon du Palais de Tokyo in Paris, is accompanied by a striking yellow vehicle whose wheels – made of old 33 and 45 vinyl records – suggest a decided inclination towards a perennially circular movement.

Rossella Biscotti: *The Sun Shines in Kiev*

Vladimir Shevchenko was one of the first filmmakers allowed to shoot inside Chernobyl's 'red zone' shortly after the accident at the nuclear power plant in 1986. The filmmaker and the film were both exposed to the radioactive particles in the area. Presenting clips from Shevchenko's film with a soundtrack of narrating voices, often unreliable and contradictory, *The Sun Shines in Kiev* investigates the relationship between historical truth and personal memories. The video is accompanied by a poster that collects images of the texts relating to the phases of elaborating the project and a lead plate with the hand-engraved text of the *Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities* from 1957, part of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community.

Christian Frosi, Diego Perrone: *Untitled*

For some years now, Diego Perrone and Christian Frosi have been travelling through Italy to discover the independent art spaces of the peninsula. Their travelling experiences resulted in *Artissima Lido* in Turin in 2011 (in collaboration with Renato Leotta). The table on show at BOZAR, with its unusual and vaguely impossible proportions, was originally conceived for *Les Associations Libres*, organized by the Dena Foundation at la maison rouge in Paris in 2012. At BOZAR, it hosts a valuable collection of art

books and magazines from the vibrant and extensive range of art Italian publishing houses with European distribution. A table around which to gather and socialize.

Chiara Fumai: *La donna delinquente*

La donna delinquente is a misogynistic-positivist book by Cesare Lombroso published in 1893, when the criminologist was following the séances of the illiterate medium Eusapia Palladino, in Italy and in Europe. Chiara Fumai invites us to attend the ghosts conference of Lombroso and other positivist scientists, among them Charles Robert Richet, Hugo Münsterberg, Filippo Bottazzi, as well as of the well-known journalist Luigi Barzini. The voices travel through time to quibble about Eusapia Palladino, spirits and images, preconceptions, credulity and the ongoing rivalry between man and woman.

Renato Leotta: *Une installation d'une expérience collective and Belvedere*

The performance *Une installation d'une expérience collective* and the 16mm film *Belvedere* by Renato Leotta are like windows that open onto the Italian landscape set in the exhibition space of BOZAR. The opening to the outside has been a traditional *topos* of pictorial representation for centuries. Updated by the artist through the languages of video and performance, this metaphorical opening to the landscape invites us to ask questions today about the representation of contemporary Italy, as seen through the eyes of someone who would like to leave, but can't.

Cesare Pietroiusti: *BOZAR Silent Tour*

At the end of the exhibition *The Yellow Side of Sociality*, Cesare Pietroiusti invites the public on a guided tour of rooms and spaces usually inaccessible to them, thus unveiling spaces and events that are closely linked to the Art Nouveau building designed by Victor Horta in the 1920s. Pietroiusti is an artist who has always reflected on the ambiguous boundary between reality and *mise-en-scène*, between life and art. This boundary becomes palpable beneath the visitor's feet through these guided tours conceived for BOZAR.

Vettor Pisani, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Ettore Spalletti, Franz West: *Cuarto Amarillo*

This environmental work, dominated by a warm yellow tone, is the result of a unique meeting of four extraordinary artists, promoted by the Galleria Pieroni in 1992 for Arco, the contemporary art fair in Madrid. *Cuarto Amarillo* is the joint creation of four sensibilities, each one following its own research and inclinations. The work aimed at presenting, in a commercial and trade context, a singular artistic proposal consisting of 'subtle tensions and relationships that cannot be found in solo or group exhibitions'.

Marinella Senatore: *Rosas-Movie Set*

An attic flooded with light, a mirror, a bar for ballet exercises, as well as all that is needed for a rehearsal room or a photo shoot: this work by Marinella Senatore is a space of possibilities. Simultaneously an environmental installation with a strong narrative character and a place for the public to use, *ROSAS - Movie Set* is a creative platform for exchange between the artist and the audience, freely available to anyone who requests it following a protocol established by the artist.

Luca Vitone: *Eppur si muove*

Eppur si muove is the most famous sentence uttered by Galileo Galilei: Luca Vitone has adopted it for a series of works devoted to the themes of travel, migration and attention to minority cultures, all of which are key to his artistic work, as well as being of critically important both socially and politically. The series, started in 2002, includes *Eppur si muove*, a sofa in the shape of a red spoked wheel, the central symbol of the flag of the Roma people. *Eppur si muove* is an object and a concept, a seat that becomes a space for meeting and reflection.

MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO

LOVE DIFFERENCE - MAR MEDITERRANEO

10.09.2014 > 18.01.2015

The *Love Difference* table is a plea for a cultural exchange. An invitation to a dialogue, to all the inhabitants of the Mediterranean and to anyone wishing to participate in it. The reflecting table is shaped like the Mediterranean basin, while the chairs symbolise the cultures of the different countries bordering on the sea. *Love Difference*, essentially, is an invitation to discover these cultures, which can be a mutually enriching experience.



Pistoletto

Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Love Difference* – *Mar Mediterraneo*, 2003-2005, Courtesy Cittadellarte, Biella, Photo : P. Terzi

THE THIRD PARADISE

04.07 > 31.12.2014

The Italian contemporary artist Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Third Paradise* symbolises the only possible future for humanity. The installation depicts the reconciliation of nature and artifice, represented by the outer "circles". On one side, the environment of which humanity is a product; on the other, the intelligence that humanity has produced: two opposite paradises in danger of mutual destruction. Their fusion forms a third, the central "circle", which finally reconciles them.



Pistoletto, Third Paradise

© N. Setari

Location: Council of the European Union, Justus Lipsius Building, Rue de la Loi | Wetstraat 175, 1000 Brussels
Open: Mondays to Fridays: 8 am > 7 pm

LECTURE BY MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO & CITTADELLARTE

30.10.2014

Michelangelo Pistoletto & Cittadellarte Architecture have been invited to BOZAR for an exceptional discussion about the interaction between society and architecture. Pistoletto founded Cittadellarte in 1998. This creative and artistic laboratory for new developments in culture, economy and politics is located in a former textile factory. A few years ago an architect's firm moved into Cittadellarte. The architects have conducted pioneering research into sustainable and alternative materials. Do not miss this encounter, it is a unique opportunity to meet this influential visual artist and find out more about his views on architecture.

PRESS RELEASE

Italy is a cradle of culture that continues to be a source of inspiration. In the past travelling to Rome and other Italian cities was a rite of passage for painters and sculptors. Nowadays Italian artists fan out across Europe. This autumn take the opportunity to meet the artists of the BOZAR *Focus on Italy* on the roads of migration, transformation and social commitment, with Gothic paintings from Siena, contemporary visual art, concerts, theatre, dance, literature and architecture lectures.

The starting point consists of two complementary exhibitions. Rare masterpieces from the heyday of the Gothic Age will travel to Brussels for *Paintings from Siena. Ars Narrandi in the European Gothic Age* (10.09.2014 > 18.01.2015). The Sienese masters broke free from the rigid confines of the Byzantine tradition and developed a more narrative visual language.

The social and participatory aspect is the main theme of *The Yellow Side of Sociality. Italian Artists in Europe* (10.09.2014 > 18.01.2015). The exhibition brings together work by the *arte povera* pioneers Michelangelo Pistoletto, Ettore Spalletti and Vettor Pisani, with works by the new generation.

Paul Dujardin, CEO & Artistic Director BOZAR: “A vital aspect of our approach is that we do not just limit ourselves to displaying work or having it performed. Instead we believe in establishing a dialogue with the artists to better understand their commitment as a whole. Pistoletto's work as an artist and the driving force behind the Cittadellarte-Fondazione in Biella appeals to me very much: he embodies the intended link between artists and citizens, the participatory idea, art as a form of community building, and the constructive approach which Italian artists are propagating across Europe.”

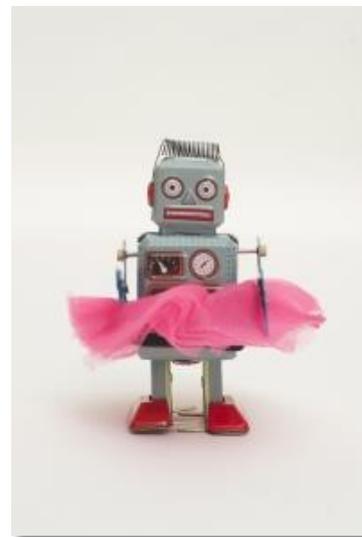
A special event in *Focus on Italy* is the première of a production by **Teatro Valle Occupato** from Rome, an artistic offshoot of the Occupy movement. This classic theatre in Rome has been occupied since June 2011 by artists and their sympathisers out of protest against the impending privatisation. BOZAR will stage *Il Macello Di Giobbe* (15 > 16.10), the first performance by this company which takes an extremely collectivist approach to theatre.

Italy's magnificent cultural heritage continues to be a source of inspiration and transformation. Together with his company and amateur dancers from Brussels **Virgilio Sieni**, the director of Biennale Danza 2014 in Venice, will create a dance performance (VITA NOVA_BRUSSELS : 28 > 30.11) in the galleries where *Paintings from Siena* will be exhibited. The **Quayola** collective will digitally work with ceiling paintings by Italian masters and altarpieces by Rubens and Van Dyck in the main Horta Hall during the BOZAR Electronic Arts Festival (25 > 27.09).

The combination of tradition and innovation also gives rise to a mix of generations. BOZAR LITERATURE provides a platform for the young authors **Niccolò Ammaniti**, **Silvia Avallone** and **Paolo Giordano** (who is world famous since the publication of *The Solitude of Prime Numbers*) (23.10). We will also roll out the red carpet for two divas who have inspired many dreams: the mezzo-soprano **Cecilia Bartoli** (13.11) and the Italian film star **Claudia Cardinale** (06.10).

23.10.2014 & 02.11.2014: *BALLET MEKANIQUE*

Interactive concert by GAME (Ghent Advanced Master Ensemble & Inga Hákonardóttir (dance). Five young contemporary musicians and a dancer express the vitality of the city with the help of some really bizarre instruments - including bird whistles, toy trumpets, and whoopee cushions.



Ballet Mekanique

24.10.2014: CHŒUR DE CHAMBRE DE NAMUR - *REQUIEM SICILIANO*

Traditionally the Chœur de chambre de Namur always presents a fascinating programme and this concert is no different with the *Requiem* by Bonaventura Rubino (c. 1600-1668), an unknown composer. This Franciscan monk was appointed *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral of Palermo. His *Requiem* immerses in a universe of sound that is both despondent and light, pure and without frills. Timeless music!



Chœur de Chambre de Namur
© Jacques Verrees



Leonardo García Alarcón
© CCR Ambronay / Bertrand Pichène

06.11.2014: MUNTAGNA NERA & GRAINDELAVOIX

Coalmine-blues from Limburg by a reborn Italo-Belgian Music Club.

In the late 70's and early 80's the sons and daughters of Italian miners performed their traditional tearjerkers in the most renowned venues in Europe. With Muntagna Nera the coalmine-blues of Limburg became legendary. The height of its fame was followed by a longterm hiatus...Thirty years later Björn Schmelzer of Graindelavoix rediscovers the voices of a lost area and convinces them to climb on stage again, accompanied by the musicians of Graindelavoix.



Muntagna Nera

13.11.2014: CECILIA BARTOLI, MEZZO - I BAROCCHISTI

Cecilia Bartoli surely needs no introduction. Since 2000, the Italian diva has surprised us on every one of her visits to the Centre for Fine Arts. Not only with her spectacular voice, but also with her carefully-thought-out programmes, often focused on a theme that opens a window onto a forgotten aspect of musical history. After introducing us to neglected musicians such as Agistino Steffani and exploring Viennese Classicism in the music of Gluck, Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, la Bartoli now immerses us in the baroque repertoire she loves so much and which her outstanding stage presence serves with such brio.



Cecilia Bartoli

05.12.2014: NATIONAL ORCHESTRA OF BELGIUM - World premiere Matteo Franceschini

Programme:

Richard Strauss *4 Interludes (Intermezzo, op. 72), Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, op. 28*

Sergey Prokofiev *Concerto for violin and orchestra no. 1, op. 19*

Matteo Franceschini *World premiere* (commissioned by BNO in the frame of the centenary of World War I, with the support of the Services of the Prime Minister and of the National Lottery)

Dutch with Russian roots, Liza Ferschtman is an accomplished violinist who won the influential Dutch Music Prize in her home country. She performs the romantic *First Violin Concerto* by Sergei Prokofiev. This is an unusual work in terms of form as, rather than the customary three-part fast-slow-fast structure the composer went for slow-fast-slow. Works by Richard Strauss precede and follow this performance on the programme. We begin with a number of interludia from the seldom performed opera *Intermezzo*, while the symphonic poem *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* remains one of his most popular works. During this concert pride of place is also given to a commissioned work by the young Italian composer Matteo Franceschini.

BOZAR CINEMA

06.10.2014: CLAUDIA CARDINALE: Conversation & “Il Gattopardo”

On 6 October BOZAR CINEMA & CINEMATEK will receive Claudia Cardinale, the great Italian actress, who will personally present the digitally restored version of Luchino Visconti’s masterpiece *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*). She will be interviewed on stage at the Centre for Fine Arts and discuss some the highlights of her life and career. The film will be projected on a big screen for the occasion.

Simultaneously, CINEMATEK organises the cycle Claudia Cardinale (01.09 > 13.11) and a retrospective Luchino Visconti, with whom Claudia Cardinale collaborated four times (01.09 > 06.10).



Claudia Cardinale in
Il Gattopardo

BOZAR LITERATURE

23.10.2014: NICCOLÒ AMMANITI, SILVIA AVALLONE & PAOLO GIORDANO

Italian literature is enjoying a new wave of young and talented writers. They are translated and read all over the world. BOZAR brought the three most talented of them together for a unique encounter. The evening is presented by Ine Roon, journalist of *De Standaard*.



Paolo Giordano, Niccolò Ammaniti, Silvia Avallone

BOZAR THEATRE

15 & 16.10.2014: FAUSTO PARAVIDINO (TEATRO VALLE OCCUPATO)- *IL MACELLO DI GIOBBE*

The versatile Italian writer, playwright, and director Fausto Paravidino presents the first collective production of the Teatro Valle Occupato. Since June 2011, artists and others have been occupying the theatre in the centre of Rome, which dates from 1727, determined to prevent its privatisation and to maintain its independence.

In *Il Macello di Giobbe*, we meet an average family, whose ordinary lives are disrupted by the financial crisis. The famous actor Filippo Dini plays Job, the deeply religious and sorely tried father.

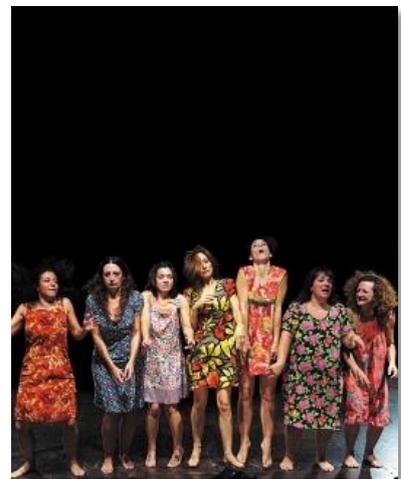


Il Macello di Giobbe
© Valeria and Tiziana Tomasulo - Teatro Valle Occupato

24 > 27.02.2015: EMMA DANTE - *LE SORELLE MACALUSO* - THÉÂTRE NATIONAL

With *Le sorelle Macaluso* (*The Macaluso sisters*), Emma Dante, a leading figure of the Italian contemporary stage, explores the human soul once again. Life, family, filiation, death. Presented in the framework of the European cities on stage project, this play performed in Sicilian and surtitled in French, is presented in the form of a melodrama. A creation that could be seen this summer at the Festival d'Avignon.

As part of « The International selection by BOZAR + Théâtre national + KVS ».

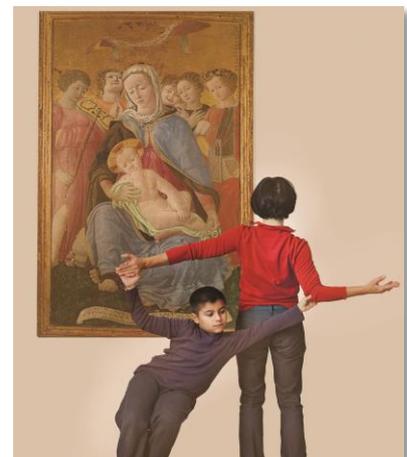


Le Sorelle Macaluso
© Clarissa Capellani

BOZAR DANCE

28 > 30.11.2014: VIRGILIO SIENI - *VITA NOVA_BRUSSELS*

Virgilio Sieni, an internationally renowned Italian choreographer and director of the dance biennale in Venice, will draw on several works in the exhibition Paintings from Siena. Ars Narrandi in Europe's Gothic Age to create with *VITA NOVA_BRUSSELS* a dance that illustrates the theme of "Mothers, Children and Angels". With the dancers of his company and amateur dancers from Brussels he will develop an emotional choreography in which the dancers' movements establish a dialogue with the art works in the exhibition.



Virgilio Sieni,
MADRI E FIGLI -
Siena, 2011
© Ela Bialkowska

30.09.2014: MARTINO TATTARA (DOGMA) - *LIVING/WORKING. HOW TO LIVE TOGETHER*



Martino Tattara
Living/Working: How to Live Together.
Proposals for the EU quarter in Brussels.
Urban block, elevations © Dogma

For the first talk of the 2014–2015 season, BOZAR ARCHITECTURE and *A+ Architecture in Belgium* have invited Martino Tattara to present the recent work of the Dogma architectural practice, which he and Pier Vittorio Aureli co-founded in 2002. Tattara will focus in particular on the connections between developments in working conditions and architecture. As work has become much more flexible than in the past, the use of space has also become more mobile: workplaces and private spaces have tended to merge. Ideas about town planning, however, have not taken this development into account. Our speaker will look at a number of proposals, incorporating this new approach to work/life issues, that have been put forward for cities such as Chicago, Tallinn, and Brussels. (Coproduction: *A+ Architecture in Belgium*)

21.10.2014: LECTURE BY TOBIA SCARPA (IT/EN). Introduction by Tobia Scarpa & Renata Codello - *Venice Art Mile*

The architect and designer Tobia Scarpa (born in Venice in 1935) works in the field of design as well as in architecture and in the restoration of historic buildings. Some of his pieces of furniture are on display in a number of the world's most prestigious museums, including the Louvre and the MoMA. He has also been one of the most important designers of Benetton factories. Scarpa has recently completed the renovation and extension of the Galleria dell'Accademia in Venice, which is now part of the city's "Art Mile", the sequence of museums that includes François Pinault's Punta della Dogana, the Fondazione Vedova, and the Guggenheim Museum. The talk will be preceded by an introduction, focusing specifically on this project, by Tobia Scarpa and Renata Codello, Venice's Superintendent of Monuments. (Coproduction: *A+ Architecture in Belgium*)



Tobia Scarpa
Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice, 2014
© Riccardo Bucci

BOZAR ELECTRONIC ARTS FESTIVAL

25.09 > 15.10.2014: BOZAR ELECTRONIC ARTS FESTIVAL (BEAF) - Media Art & Installations: Quayola - *Strata #4*

Altarpieces by Rubens and Van Dyck may seem very distant from our own time. In his *Strata #4* installation, however, the Italian contemporary artist Quayola achieves a harmonious dialogue between then and now. Using special software, he transforms symbols of universal beauty and perfection into triggers and instructions for the creation of new, contemporary art. He reduces the old works of art to their essence, to colours and geometric forms, removing their symbolism.

Quayola, *Strata #4*,
2011, Audiovisual Installation



COLLOQUIUM

18.01.2015: BYZANTIUM AND FLEMISH ART - Contact and Influences

More info soon on www.bozar.be.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Paintings from Siena. Ars Narrandi in Europe's Gothic Age

The Yellow Side of Sociality. Italian Artists in Europe

Michelangelo Pistoletto: Love Difference - Mar Mediterraneo

Address

Centre for Fine Arts
Rue Ravensteinstraat 23
1000 Brussels

Dates

10.09.2014 > 18.01.2015

Opening hours

Open: Tuesday to Sunday: 10 am > 6 pm (Thursday: 10 am > 9 pm)

Closed: Monday

Tickets

Paintings from Siena: € 12 - € 10 (BOZARfriends) - € 6 - € 2

The Yellow Side of Sociality + Michelangelo Pistoletto: free entrance

Combiticket *Paintings from Siena + Rubens and his Legacy* (25.09.2014 > 04.01.2015): € 20 - € 18 (BOZARfriends)

Audioguide *Paintings from Siena* : € 3

Visitor's guide *Paintings from Siena*: € 2 - € 1 (BOZARfriends)

Catalogue

Paintings from Siena. Ars Narrandi in Europe's Gothic Age: € 39 (4 versions: NL/FR/EN/IT, silvana editoriale, BOZAR BOOKS)

The Yellow Side of Sociality, Italian Artists in Europe (2 versions EN/IT, 96p., BOZAR BOOKS)

BOZAR Info & tickets

www.bozar.be – info@bozar.be – 0032 2 507 82 00

Press images

www.bozar.be

Password: press

PRESS CONTACTS

BOZAR – Centre for Fine Arts

Rue Ravensteinstraat 23

1000 Brussels

Info & tickets: T. +32 (0)2 507 82 00 – www.bozar.be

Leen Daems

Press Officer BOZAR EXPO

T. +32 (0)2 507 83 89

T. +32 (0)479 98 66 07

leen.daems@bozar.be

Hélène Tenreira

Senior Press Officer BOZAR THEATRE, DANCE, CINEMA, CORPORATE

T. +32 (0)2 507 83 91

T. +32 (0)476 96 02 01

helene.tenreira@bozar.be

Barbara Porteman

Press Officer FESTIVAL, WORLD MUSIC, ARCHITECTURE

T. +32 (0)2 507 84 48

T. +32 (0)479 98 66 04

barbara.porteman@bozar.be

Marie Mourlon

Press Officer BOZAR MUSIC, LITERATURE

T. +32 (0)2 507 84 27

T. +32 (0)471 86 22 31

marie.mourlon@bozar.be